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**Contact:**

Kelly Ferrara  
(314) 991-4641 x113  
Cell (314) 221-2251

**Time Critical Diagnosis Task Force Convenes in Jefferson City**

*The state's most highly-respected minds in medicine and emergency care come together to improve Missouri's emergency response systems*

**Jefferson City, MO. (January 11, 2008)** – Missouri's Time Critical Diagnosis Task Force will meet Tuesday, January 15, 2008, to compile recommendations for the improvement of emergency care, with the goal of lowering the mortality and morbidity associated with stroke and ST-Segment Elevation Myocardial Infarction (STEMI).

Created by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) in collaboration with the Missouri Foundation for Health (MFH), the Task Force is a gathering of more than 100 experts in the emergency care industry.

"This Task Force is a unique convergence of different fields and expertise, and we all share a responsibility to provide for Missouri citizens and their health needs," said DHSS Director Jane Drummond. "And that is our ultimate task – getting our trauma, stroke, and STEMI patients the right care, in the right place, in the right amount of time."

While Missouri's heart disease and stroke death rates are declining, heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the state. Stroke ranks third.

"In areas where stroke systems have been implemented – including at least one community in Missouri – mortality and morbidity rates have decreased," said Dr. J. William "Bill" Jermyn, Director of Emergency Medical Services for DHSS. "Evolving the system of care can significantly improve health outcomes for Missourians who suffer from stroke or STEMI."

The Task Force will meet four times to analyze current heart disease and stroke care in the state and across the nation in order to develop a strategy and operational structure of a Time Critical Diagnosis System.

The day-long meeting will include presentations from six leading medical experts in the state, including:

- Sherri Homan, RN, PhD, Chronic Disease Epidemiologist, DHSS

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- George Kichura, MD, FACC, FACP, FSCAI, Medical Director, Cardiac Catheterization Lab, St. John's Mercy Medical Center and Heart Hospital
- Scott Duff, MD, Specialty Certification-Vascular Neurology, CoxHealth System Stroke Team Medical Director
- Karen Connell, Time Critical Diagnosis System, Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program, DHSS
- J. William "Bill" Jermyn, DO, FACEP, Medical Director, Emergency Medical Services, Director's Office, DHSS
- Samar Muzaffar, MD, MPH, University of Missouri Medical Center

The mission of the Time Critical Diagnosis Task Force is to develop a plan and recommendations to submit to DHSS Director Drummond that pursue healthy outcomes for all who enter the Missouri healthcare system for reasons of trauma, stroke or STEMI.

**About DHSS:** *The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services protects and promotes quality of life and health for all Missourians by developing and implementing programs and systems that provide: information and education, effective regulation and oversight, quality services and surveillance of diseases and conditions.*

**About MFH:** *Established in 2000, MFH is the largest non-governmental funder of community health activities in the state. It is dedicated to serving the uninsured, underinsured and underserved in 84 Missouri counties and the City of St. Louis. For more information about MFH, visit [www.mffh.org](http://www.mffh.org).*

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